

MOTHER'S LOVE SONGS

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ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE





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MOTHER'S LOVE SONGS

ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

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DEDICATION

*Thou Wisdom, unto me communicate
Of God, (with all but His, commensurate;)
Thou Brightness, arched sky-like from east to west;
Thou Goodness, panoplied o'er all the rest!
Thou Sweetness, like a perfume in the room;
Thou Cheeriness, engulfing all of gloom;
Thou Mother—thou whose smiles revealings are
Of tenderesses rapt and singular;—
Thy child's and thine, Love's sweet mysterious
 breath,
Which builds the wonder-worlds of Life and Death!*

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MOTHER'S LOVE SONGS

THE LITTLE DREAM-MOTHER

The little Dream-Mother! Her hands are prayers;
Her voice is an echo sweet;
And roses white as the pale moonlight—
The wake of her noiseless feet!

The little Dream-Mother! Her brow is pearl;
Her hair is a silver mist;
Yet in her eyes there's a light outvies
Those shadows of amethyst!

The little Dream-Mother! This wonder-look
The heart of all care beguiles;
While from her face, in immortal grace,
The soul of her childhood smiles!

WHAT WAS IT MADE ME LOVE YOU,
SWEET?

What was it made me love you, Sweet?
Was it the bloom of the apple-flower
Tinting your face, or that dusky dower,
The wealth of your hair,—was it this, my Sweet?

Was it your white brow's arching, Dear?
Or, the light lift of those shining eyes,
Shattering fears, as a glad sunrise
The dark of the night,—was it this, my Dear?

Was it your life-song's music, Love,
Mating faint notes of my lowlier song,
Thrilling a lyric of joy along
The tide of two lives,—was it this, my Love?

Or that one Day,—remembering, Sweet,
Deep in your heart was its Need of me,
Willing the grace of our love to be,—
God gave me to you? It was this, my Sweet!

MY LITTLE WHITE ROSE

As white as the snowdrift,
As fresh as the dew,
As fair as the vision
Of morning are you,—
My little White Rose!

As sweet as a thought is,
As true as a star,
As kind as the mantle
Of night falling far,—
My little White Rose!

As tender as twilight,
As loving as sleep,
As faithful as angels
That holy watch keep,—
My little White Rose!

To my springtime, its blossom,
To my summer, its glow,
To my autumn, its fruitage,
To my winter, its snow,—
My little White Rose!

To my day, what its hope is,
To my night, all its rest,
To my heart, its deep joy-core,
Hidden sweet in the breast,—
My little White Rose!

To my spirit, love's music,
To my life, sorrow furled,
To my eyes, what God's light is,
To my arms, all the world,—
My little White Rose!

WHEN SHE COMES AND GOES

When she goes, the sun goes with her,
 In the day;
When she goes, the stars at night-time
 Slip away!
When she goes, there is no sweetness
 In sweet air;
When she goes, Joy seems in hiding,
 Off somewhere.

When she comes, the dawn comes with her,
 In the night;
When she comes, a star is shining
 In sunlight!
When she comes, I hear birds singing
 In still air;
When she comes, I feel Joy's heartbeats,
 Everywhere.

SO BEAUTIFUL AND GOOD

She is like a little flower,
 She is like a little star;
She is like a silver lakelet
 Where the water-lilies are!

She is like a little jewel,
 She is like a music-bar;
She is like a pretty woodlet
 Where the violets hiding are!

She is like a little valley,
 Like a little hill afar!
She is like a bit of cloudlet
 Where the rainbow's colors are!

She is like a benediction
 With no human blight to mar:
She is like a perfect lyric
 Where Love's deep revealings are!

She is like all visions lovely,
 Whether near or whether far!
She is like all dreamings holy
 Where divine aspirings are.

SWEETHEART-MOTHER

My first white thought and its fruition;
 Hope's seed, the bough's reality!
My twilight-dream, my dawn's full mission;
 Joy's root and towering tree!

My bloom, my fruit! Love's incarnation
 As sister, friend, and comrade sweet!
My offering; my expiation;
 My ladder to God's Feet!

My dream; my light; my revelation;
 My poem, and my picture rare;
My monitor; my inspiration;
 My love-song, and my prayer!

MY "BEAUTY ROSE"

I may not cull the perfect flowers
In crimson beauty dressed,
And lay them in thy dear, dear hands
With thus my love confessed;—

But I may dream I hold them close
And breathe their fragrance sweet,
And fold a kiss within each one,
My mother dear to greet;

And thou may'st dream I gave them thee
And that thou hold'st them fast,
And that thou hear'st the words they say
I whispered at the last:—

"So like the perfect roses, she,
My Matron sweet, with all
The promise of her youth fulfilled;
And no wish to recall

One dreamy hour! Her great warm heart
All full of love as these
Of scented balm, to bless the world
And its great trials ease!"

My sweet Rose-mother, may our Lord,
Who gave me unto thee,
Prepare us here to bloom for Him
Throughout Eternity!

MOTHER'S PANSIES

A bowlful of pansies I seem to be,
But whitest dreams are hidden in me,
With many a prayer folded tenderly,
 And under them all is Love—
Love, whose hopes outvie its fears,
Love that smiles in spite of tears,
Love that saves the while it cheers,
 Under them all is Love!

A bowlful of pansies I seem to be,
But sweetest thoughts do abide in me!
With many a hope inlaid tenderly,
 And under them all is Love—
Love that "stands by", right or wrong,
Love that brings a joy along,
Love that makes a little song,
 Under them all is Love!

IN APRIL

The Coming of the Pansies, once again—
Their grave-glad faces shining in the sun;
They keep the tryst: to bring hearts-ease to men—
The yearly tryst—their ministry begun!

And one I know my Pansy dear I name,
Because her eyes hold just that steady look
The Pansies give, their mission to proclaim—
'Twould heal and bless tho' all the world for-
sook!

And I have named this one my Pansy dear,
Because her mission is to ease the heart;
Her ministry, to change or grief or fear
To holy hoping, with angelic art!

'Tis she, my Mother—dearest, sweetest, best—
I softly sing to, in the April air!
'Tis she I humbly gather to my breast
In thankfulness—my Pansy sweet to wear!

THE MOTHER ANGEL

How near she moves—with holy eyes!
And surely wings there be
Whose dazzling white her radiance makes,
Whose shadow falls on me!

Her amaranth and asphodel
Illume this earthly way;
Like Heaven's music falls her voice
In benedicite.

Upon her lips the smile that speaks
A soul's divinest mood:
For there above her hallowed brow—
The Star of Motherhood!

MY LOVE-LADY

Oh, all the air is honey-sweet,
Tho' Winter's sky's above—
For one's anear whose name is just
Another word for Love!

And violets are everywhere,
Tho' earth's the Winter's own—
For I clasp hands with one who hath
To love Incarnate grown!

Behold—the Mother of my heart!
While her rapt face I see,
Summer and winter, dawn and dew
Mean naught but Love to me!

MOTHER'S FLOWER

My love's great Rose! A thousand petals seem,
In velvet softness sweet-perfumed, to breathe
In hallowed bands, in beauteous row on row:
And some of them are little thoughts of love;
And some of them are little hopes of love;
And more of them are little prayers of love—
And soft they crowd, with touch of rose-leaf wings!

MY LADY-LOVE

She is moving close beside me
Through the happy years:
God hath given her thus to guide me,
Swift to stay my tears!

Gentle hands on mine to lead me
All of Life's long way:
God hath made her heart to need me
Every night and day!

She is mine e'en though Death take me,—
I have not a fear:
God hath willed she'll ne'er forsake me,
Little Mother Dear!

MY RICHES

I have two Mothers! One is she
Whose love gave breath to me:
The inspiration of a life
Through her maternity!

And one is she whom from the Cross
Sweet Jesus gave to me:
"Behold thy Mother—" thus He left
His world its Legacy!

HOME AND LOVE

There's a little Nest hung low
On the World's great Tree!
All warm and sweet, but ever so wee—
Yet it serves for you and me—
Together, dear, together!

There's a little Boat adrift
On Life's Sea so wide!
It trusts to Heaven for wind and for tide,
Does the Love-boat we two ride—
Together, dear, together!

THE MOTHER-DEEPS

She's such a little mother,
All the world's her child!
The golden head, the silver head,
The peevish and the mild!

She's such a little mother,
She always sees a way!
Ah, who can blame the mother-heart
That watches night and day?

She's such a little mother,
She deems us all her own;
And chides and heals us in a breath,
And who shall make a moan?

She's such a little mother—
(Love's banner never furled—)
She reaches out her arms to bless
The whole round weary world!

ROBIN-TIME

'Tis Pansy-time! And in their velvets neat
Of gold and purple, kneel they in a row,
The little Pansy-pages at her feet,—
For they were born to serve her, that they know!

'Tis Snowdrop-time! In dainty caps of white
Each Snowdrop-baby droops a sleepy head
Within its leaf-laced cradle rocking light —
Yet wakes and dimples as she nears its bed!

'Tis Jonquil-time! And in their golden shoon
The Jonquil-children skip along before
To make sweet paths for her who follows soon,
Her childhood wonder in her eyes once more!

'Tis Blossom-time! And in their mousseline gowns
Of pink and white the Blossom-girls they go
And curtsey to her as she treads the downs,
Her face a blossom with a wreath of snow!

'Tis Lilac-time! And in their silken skirts
The Lilac-ladies bow and waft to her
Their perfumes sweet; while softly each asserts
That it is Mother's Time when Spring's astir!

Magnolia-time! And in their stately way
The old Magnolia-dames they stare and stare,
And smooth their mantles coyly that they may
(Because she is so 'lovely) seem as fair!

It's Robin-time! And in his waistcoat red,
The Robin-laddie runs across the grass, —
But, of a sudden, stops and lifts his head—
It surely is the time for Her to pass!

THE MEANING OF IT ALL

The Chestnuts are opening their green umbrellas!

The Maples are shaking their little joy-bells!

The Poplar, the Ash and the Elm are unfolding

All their tiny green flags, yet not one of them tells

The wonderful Secret: why they wear the Spring's
colors!

Why they wave her sweet favors in banners of
green;

Why they spread their soft feathery blooms for a
carpet;—

But *I* know! They have made Little Mother
their Queen!

And all of the Song-birds are singing together

Somewhere out of sight a sweet chorus, I ween!

Their loving Avowal to Spring and to Nature—

That they have just made Little Mother their
Queen!

The Jonquil is fleet, but the Crocus was fleeter

That first brought the news! Now the Pansies
are seen

To form in procession,—All the Flowers follow
after,—

Joy of joys! They have made Little Mother
their Queen!

THERE IS NOTHING TOO SWEET FOR
MOTHER

The earth smiles flowers where her footsteps go
Who is dearer than any other ;
The sky is hers, with its cloud of snow ;—
There is nothing too sweet for mother !

For her, the sunrise glories afar ;
One sunset after another ;
The twilight hour with its single star ;—
There is nothing too sweet for mother !

The song-sparrow sings to her all the day ;
The robin's her little brother ;
Her pansies whisper, "Heart's-ease away" ;—
There is nothing too sweet for mother !

Love-words, love-deeds, and tenderer, too,
Than we give to any other,
For Life's holiest best is her blessed due,—
There is nothing too sweet for mother !

A FAIRY I KNOW

There's a beautiful Fairy on earth
Whom I always, always knew!
She wears no "invisible cap"—
She is here for all to view!
(I love you, she says.)

She does not stay in the woods,
Or under the leaves and flowers;
She just lives in the house with me,
Through all the days and hours!
(I love you, she sings.)

Ah, she is gentle and wise,
This beautiful Fairy I know:
She tells me that Love and Truth
Will make me grow and grow!
(I love you, she smiles.)

O Fairy-Mother so sweet,
I long to be just like you!
Shall I hide my self, like a seed,—
Was not that the way you grew?
(I love you, she cries!)

A BIRTHDAY

The wee birds chirp from the ivied wall,
The blossoms breathe sweet on the spray,
The sunbeams everywhere softly fall,
'Tis somebody's birthday—to-day!

Ah, fitting the hours should flow so sweet,
And tender and warm the air—
The sky and the earth together greet,
In somebody's birthday to share!

“I pray you tell who may somebody be?” —
I hear a question low—
Let me kiss her first and then you will see!
God bless her—it's mother, you know!

MOTHER'S DAY

And so, the Spring has come again—

Because her feast-day came, you see!

And just because her feast-day came,

The leaves smiled out upon each tree!

For very gladness they laughed out!

And all the breezes made a rhyme

Of sweetest harmony to grace

Her feast-day in the Maying time!

And all the daisies bend and bow

And every buttercup is here,

And pansies smile,—because it's just

The sweetest day in all the year!

THE FOREVER

Life here, life There,—
That is all!

Just a little Daytime in the World
Of striving and of failing, joy and blight;
And then a dreamless leaning on the bosom of Death,
Who brings the Night;
And next, the Wonder of Awakening
'Mid Fadeless Light!

Love here, love There,—
That is all!

Just a little Glory in the World:
The sacrificial way that is Love's own;—
And then a sheer Forgetting on the heart of Death.
Love overthrown?
Nay—the Remembering of Love, in Heaven:
No Dream outgrown!

Thee here, thee There,—
That is all!

Just a Giving-up that brings a Gift
When we, with backward looks on Earth's bright
bowers—
Obedient children, answering the voice of Death—
Shall drop Life's flowers,
And run to find each other where God is,
His Roses, ours!

GUARDIAN MOTHER

O watcher from the heart's strong tower,
O warder from before I was,
Caretaker since life's firstling hour,
Of every joy the cause!

For all my light, the one to praise,
Of my ideals, the sturdy root;
Remembered bloom of childhood days,
My later life's sweet fruit!

Unwearied keeper of my soul,
O Eye that searcheth through and through!
Thou heart of hearts, as years onroll,
Belovèd lover true!

IMMORTALITY

O mother-love, all selfless-pure,
 O mother-care that foldeth me,
 O mother-heart that needeth me
While Life and After-life endure—

O mother-soul that wilt seek mine,
 (Time's guardianship all unforgot)
 In some far glorious God-lit spot—
As even so shall mine seek thine!

LOVE-NAMES

And some there be that never mark the years,
To Love's sweet music years so gently run:
And still I carry thee my joys, my tears;
And still thou callest me thy little one!

Thy loved one, and thy "treasure on life's sea!"
Thou namest me thy little star apart;
Thy doveling, and thy benedicite!
Thou callest me thy "life's blood", and "thy
heart!"

Yet, while I lose the all of self in thee
As thy meek child: Time hath a woman made!
And "little one" is my new name for thee:
I know a Fear,—yet I am not afraid.

For all my will is thine, and yet the Day
Grows vaster: lo, mine Hour to tend on thee!
And lo, my spirit's Need to bless thy way:
The Mother of my mother would I be!

MY MOTHER

She is the gladness of the morning hour,
To me; the teeming splendor of the noon;
The star of evening; of the night, its moon;
And of the garden of my life, the flower,—
Which only lives to spend its holy dower
Of fragrance all unmeasured: so that soon
It freshens many lives, as some sweet tune
Seeks every heart, to bless,—ere silence lower!
Mine is she; yet is mother unto all
In that rare sympathy which makes her kind,
That tolerance, born of love, which holds in thrall
The near and far, with bonds that softly bind.
A universal Mother, selfless, sweet—
Yet only mine: I kneel and kiss her feet!

THE WONDER OF IT!

Thou are not weary yet, dear heart,
Tho' far hath been the way;
Tho' many a night hath left its smart,
And grief met many a day!

Not weary yet, O radiant one,
Tho' long thy ministry:
For Love itself is all thine own
With its dear minstrelsy—

And Love it chanteth early, long;
And ever skyward tends;
It singeth sweet, the cares among,
A song that never ends!

Not weary yet, brave heart—for Oh,
There 's that within thy blood
Can never change or fade or go:
Thy beauteous Motherhood!

A WREATH OF ARBUTUS

Full tenderly down o'er her misty hair—
I long thus to nestle my beauty wreath:
So e'en must I hie to the woods and there
Low kneel where the blossoms—the green be-
neath—

Their hidden lives lead, like the cloistered ones;
And like to the consecrate mother-bands
Who whisper of love through the rains and suns,
And orisons make of their hallowed hands!

The tinted chalices there overflow
With joyance for mortals no word may say:
Like hearts of all mothers, which overglow
With blisses that spend of themselves for aye!

The waxen blossoms there silently sing:
And ever in breathing this melody—
This musical fragrance of welcoming—
The soul of my mother doth speak with me!

COMPANIONED

A Something near me in the mystic Night
Keeps watch and ward as well as Angels bright.
It is my Thought of thee—more white its wing
Than boughs of honeyed snow the Aprils bring!

A Something by me thro' the toilful Day,
Leads on and ever on to show the way.
It is my Thought of thee—as sure and sweet
As old remembered paths to homing feet!



MOTHER

Oh, sweetest word that Language ever knew,
Which Love and Peace and Duty whisper through!
Oh, tender name that wakes to life again
In many a silenced heart the olden strain;
And holy name that like unto a prayer
Slips over lips bereft and pale with care.
Oh, joyful name that little children shout!
And blessed name that Sorrow puts to rout,
When breathed by one who clasps the mother-hand,
This deeming dearest joy by Heaven planned!
Ah, Music, Poetry, Beauty, all breathe through
This sweetest word that Language ever knew!

A BIRTHDAY

Each year she sweeter grows, and tenderer,—
For hers the mother-eyes, the mother-hands,
The mother-heart! And each year lovelier,
As on the uplands, on the hills she stands—

A little higher, nearer to the light
Of far-off splendors that like hints of dawn
Enhallow her, and consecrate my sight,
Lest I forget that we must both pass on.

For Oh, so sweet this mothered way that lies
All still as vales hill-sheltered night and day—
The while her heart, abrim in loving-wise
With mother-care, doth teach my heart its way!

THE HERITAGE OF THE NOBLE ONE

Joy! 'Tis the light of the eyes
That reflect the divineness of living:
Just the one overwhelming surprise,
E'en the bliss of outgiving!

Joy! 'Tis the throb of the heart
Love itself only once Comprehending,—
If on earth love be ever apart,
Still the grace is unending!

Joy! 'Tis the glow of the soul:
Prophet-flame of an immanent Seeing,
Which foretells, as the ages onroll,
The Fulfilment of Being!

THE MIRACLE

Belovéd, thou wert ill. And all of space
Was blotted out, and time! Thee, only thee!
Thee, thee! Ah, was it thee whose pallid face
My heart was wounding past all remedy?

Oh, darkest hour! O'er both Death's shadowy rod!
That love-lit gaze withdrawn from me—from
me!

Low, low I crouched at last remembering God:
Together—we had loved Him tenderly.

"Not yet—not yet—O Jesus, spare!" I prayed.
"Ah, ne'er shall I forego my Need of her:
But wait—O wait—the plan is not yet made
That I had dreamed for all—while loving her!

"And wait—till stronger grow this heart of mine
To bear relinquishment, to yield to Thee:
For Thy command—this passion deep, divine,
That thrills my being with its agony!"

And He, the Tender-Merciful, did Spare.
May voice or pen outbear my spirit's bliss
When straightway back to me thy Soul did fare?—
Joy's self could tell no sweeter tale than this!

Thou art, Belov'd, the mother of my Soul!
Stupendous truth, relation infinite!
All steadfast burning when I reached the goal—
My Star of Love, unquenchable, God-lit!

Thou art my faithful guardian, gentle-stern!
Ah, could I bear thy tender yoke to lose?
To fly alone I care not now to learn—
E'en though thou art anear—unless thou choose!

Since first thou heldest me against thy breast
To bless me with the first all-holy kiss;
Since I, thy loveling, in mysterious quest,
Found there my earliest thirst's unconscious
bliss;—

Oh, have I proved my love? Do I repay?
Behold—I rest on thee, Foundation Stone!
Pillar of Fire by night, and Cloud by day:
I walk by thee, for thou the way hast shown!

My light, my safety, in thy Shadow here:
Thou guide, thou shelterer, thou dove-like good;
Thou Angel militant, with mien austere,
Who hold'st aloft the Sword of Motherhood!

THE CRY OF THE DAUGHTER

'Twas yestermorn she sang to me
The old sweet nursery rhymes;
Her mother-smile caressing me,
Her voice like silver chimes!

'Twas yestereen she told to me
The old sweet fairy tales,
Her mother-arms enfolding me
Thro' elfland hills and dales!

'Twas yesternight she taught to me
The old sweet prayers to Heaven,
Her mother-eyes enhallowing me,
My every fault forgiven.

But this New day—what change to me!
I kneel beside her yet:
Her mother-heart is speaking me,
Mine eyes with tears are wet.

And this strange motherhood in me?
O long, O shadowed way!
And yet—her bosom bearing me,—
'Twas only yesterday!

THE LULLABY OF THE LEAVES

Nod-a-by, dream-a-by,
Sweet little Mother!
Dream in your chair by the window wide;
Curtain the love-lights more true than all other,
That deep in your eyes abide!
Rest, little Mother, rest.

Nod-a-by, dream-a-by,
Sweet little Mother!
Softly we breathe of far fairy days:
Dawn-light and flower-light more gay than all
other,
With butterflies' teasing ways!
Sleep, little Mother, sleep.

Nod-a-by, dream-a-by,
Sweet little Mother!
Whisper we shyly of Youth's white Dawn;
Coming of one far more dear than all other,
Who Sandals of Love put on!
Sleep, little Mother, sleep.

Nod-a-by, dream-a-by,
Sweet little Mother!
Low do we sing of your Holy Hour:
Budding a Joy then more deep than all other,
Straight out of your heart to flower!
Sleep, little Mother, sleep.

Nod-a-by, dream-a-by,
Sweet little Mother!
Chant we the peace of the Life Fulfilled:
Calm that is lovelier far than all other,
A sunset of gold o'erspilled!
Stir, little Mother, stir—

Nod no more, dream no more,
Wake, little Mother!
Shed moonlight smiles that your heart express,
Wind-whispers, flow'r-breaths, more sweet than all
other,—
The waiting ones near to Bless:
Wake, little Mother, wake!

ALL MOTHERS

Ye myriad blesséd ones, I sing
A tenderness bespeaks the dove,
The wonder of your welcoming,—
O greeting hearts, O souls of love!

Ye tireless watchers, warders true,
Who ever gaze where children rove
With eyes that softly pierce them through,—
O greeting hearts, O souls of love!

I sing your sweet near ministries;
Yet all the world such care doth move
To ever-deepening sympathies,—
O greeting hearts, O souls of love!

Ye myriad blesséd ones, who live
With minds 'twixt earth and Heaven above,
Your only prayer that *ye may Give*,—
O greeting hearts, O souls of love!

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